

5.0 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

5.1 Coordination with Federal and State Agencies

The KYTC coordinated the project study with many local, state and federal agencies which have varying degrees of jurisdiction and expertise concerning the area's natural resources and the socio-economic outcomes of building a four-lane highway.

5.1.1 Scoping Process

A formal scoping meeting was held on October 17, 2001 at the KYTC Central Office in Frankfort, Kentucky. Representatives of the following organizations attended the meeting:

U.S. Forest Service
Federal Highway Administration
Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission
Kentucky Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet, Department for Environmental Protection
Kentucky Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet, Department for Environmental Protection, Division of Water
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Central Office, Division of Environmental Analysis
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Central Office, Division of Design
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, District 8 Office
Johnson, Depp & Quisenberry, Engineering and Environmental Consultants

Attendees were provided a scoping meeting package of information several weeks prior to the meeting. The following items were contained in the package:

1. a map of the proposed corridor;
2. a draft of the Notice of Intent for the project; and
3. a draft agenda for the meeting.

In addition to coordination and public involvement, areas of concern and focus discussed at the meeting included (a) how the eastern terminus of this bypass project might affect the continuation of the I-66 alignment to the east, (b) karst topography, (c) the option of upgrading existing KY 80 to interstate standards rather than building a highway on new alignment, and (d) long range impacts to Pitman Creek. Meeting minutes are included in **Appendix E**.

The scoping process continued throughout the project study with continual input from the public as described in **Section 5.2**.

5.2 Public Involvement

One of the major components of the coordination process was the project's public involvement program. Throughout the project study, the public had considerable influence on the refinement of alternate alignments under consideration and their potential impacts.

To assure that the concerns of all citizens were heard, the KYTC developed and maintained a dialogue with the public and solicited comments using a variety of approaches including:

- public information meetings,
- an active Citizens Advisory Council,
- project newsletters,
- news releases, and
- an information repository at the KYTC District 8 Office in Somerset.

This approach utilized a customized mix of techniques and public involvement practices to (a) assure that the public would be involved in the environmental assessment process, (b) disseminate information, and (c) facilitate a two-way dialogue about issues and concerns. A range of techniques also was applied to give individuals a means to access information and participate in the dialogue at his or her own level of interest and availability.

5.2.1 Public Information Meetings

Three open-house Public Information Meetings were held at the Center for Rural Development in Somerset on November 27, 2001, May 14, 2002 and August 22, 2002 to provide the public with the opportunity to review and comment on the preliminary alignments and associated impacts. Each meeting included (a) an introductory audio-visual presentation on the project status and (b) exhibits consisting of alignment maps and cost and impact information available at the time. FHWA, KYTC and consultant staff were available to answer questions. Approximately 300 to 400 persons attended each of these meetings. At the end of the August 22, 2002 meeting a formal comment session was held to allow the public to state their preferences.

A special open-house public meeting was held on October 28, 2002 at the Pleasant Hills Baptist Church on KY 1674 to obtain public input on the best way to handle the modification of the local road and street network in the area of the proposed Somerset Northern Bypass/Relocated U.S. 27 interchange.

At both the May and August 2002 Public Information Meetings attendees were asked to complete a public comment sheet. A sample copy of each comment sheet can be found in **Appendix F**. Of the 545 comment sheets received back from the May 14, 2002 Public Information Meeting, 455 respondents favored the North Alternate. [See Section 6, Reference 24] Of the 531 comment sheets received back from the August 22, 2002 Public Information Meeting, 508 respondents preferred the North Alternate. [See Section 6, Reference 25]

5.2.2 Citizens Advisory Council

As a means of providing another way for local residents to provide input into the project, a citizens advisory council was formed in December 2001. Initially 19 citizen volunteers were invited to represent the interest areas of agriculture, business, economic development and

tourism, environment, government, and neighborhoods. The Advisory Council selected a chairperson from among its members to speak publicly on their behalf. The Advisory Council's mission was to make recommendations to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) concerning the location, effects, and mitigation of a proposed northern bypass of Somerset and its attendant alternatives. The Council was to develop criteria to evaluate project alternatives, and submit their findings and recommendations in a report to the KYTC.

Council Members in each interest area (Work Group) created their own constituent mailing lists and used several mailings to identify the primary concerns of the citizens they represented. Once each Work Group had identified the main issues, they developed their own assessment criteria, which they used to compare alignments and design features. Using the results of the KYTC's studies, they were able to bring their value systems as well as those of the general public into the study process.

At the final working session of the Council, each Work Group reported on the results of their own analyses of the alternates under consideration. A discussion by the full Council then took place to form a majority opinion on a preferred alternate to recommend to the KYTC. The Advisory Council held a formal meeting on October 17, 2002 where it presented to the KYTC and the public its findings and recommendations on which alternate alignment the majority felt would best serve the region. The Advisory Council's Report to the KYTC is included in **Appendix A**. Each Work Group's report is appended to the Advisory Council Report.

Advisory Council Formal Meetings

December 13, 2001, KYTC Annex, Somerset
October 27, 2002, Center for Rural
Development, Somerset

Advisory Council Working Sessions

February 5, 2002, KYTC Annex, Somerset
March 12, 2002, KYTC Annex, Somerset
April 23, 2002, KYTC Annex, Somerset
July 9, 2002, KYTC Annex, Somerset
August 8, 2002, KYTC Annex, Somerset
September 10, 2002, KYTC Annex, Somerset

5.2.3 Project Newsletters

Somerset Northern Bypass newsletters were produced periodically throughout the project study and sent to a mailing list of nearly 3,900 individuals including affected property owners and the Advisory Council's constituency lists. Newsletters were published prior to Public Information Meetings to make the public aware of new project study data, alignment locations, Advisory Council study progress and the outcome of issues discussions. Newsletters were sent out in November 2001, April 2002 and October 2002. Copies of the newsletters are provided in **Appendix G**. Another newsletter is expected to be sent out prior to the Public Hearing.

5.2.4 News Releases

The KYTC carried out extensive communication with the news media throughout the project study to help assure that the citizens of Somerset and Pulaski County would understand and be able to participate in the engineering design and environmental assessment process. Press releases announcing all public meetings were distributed to the *Commonwealth Journal* and

Somerset-Pulaski News Journal in advance. The Clear Channel Communications group also was contacted. A public notice advertisement also was placed in the *Commonwealth Journal* and the *Somerset-Pulaski News Journal* for the Public Information Meetings. Copies of the public notices are provided in **Appendix H**.

Personal contact with reporters was initiated by the project Public Involvement Coordinator to stimulate interest in meeting coverage and issues delineation for in-depth articles. A news and feature clip file was maintained throughout the study process showing extensive news media coverage and of all project issues.

5.2.5 Information Repository

The KYTC established an information repository at the KYTC District 8 office in Somerset so that those residents who wanted more detailed information or who were not already on the newsletter mailing list could learn more about the study. All project information, such as environmental baseline studies and detailed maps, were available for the public to view. Additionally, by having the repository at the District 8 office, individuals could ask the KYTC project coordinators specific questions and have their names placed on the newsletter mailing list.

5.2.6 Public Correspondence

The KYTC received numerous letters from citizens requesting specific information regarding alignment location and their own property. The KYTC or its consultants responded to each inquiry.

5.2.7 Public Hearing

A Public Hearing will be held upon completion and distribution of this Draft Environmental Assessment. The hearing will utilize the open-house format for the public to comment on the proposed document. The open-house format offers the public an opportunity to meet with representatives of the KYTC at a time and place which is reasonably convenient to discuss the project. Throughout the open-house session, appropriate members of the KYTC staff and consultants will be available to discuss the project with the public and answer questions.

The Hearing will be held at the Center for Rural Development in Somerset. The KYTC and its consultant staff will be stationed at map displays and exhibits which will depict the alternatives and their evaluated conditions. Someone will be available to record oral public comments. Public comments will be accepted 30 days before and 15 days after the Public Hearing. Information received during the public comment period will be incorporated into the Final Environmental Assessment.